

ENHANCING EFL WRITING SKILLS THROUGH AI-ASSISTED DIGITAL STORYTELLING: A PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract. *Writing is often considered as a challenging skill to be achieved in the EFL classroom especially in an era of post pandemic digital boom. Written assignments submitted by the EFL learners often turn out no humanized/AI generated content, which shows the significance of educating the students how to use AI ethically and constructively. This article focuses on using AI tools like ChatGPT and others for acquisition of writing skills with a special emphasis on digital storytelling. The article put forward a pedagogical framework for the enhancement of English writing skills and digital story creation through assistance of artificial intelligence. The study illustrates the pedagogical framework that include six stages: Generation of Ideas, Planning of the story, Writing the draft, AI scaffolding, Revision/Reflection and Storytelling. The article empirically explores the scope of ethical use of ChatGPT in promoting creative writing skills among the EFL students.*

Key words: *EFL writing, AI-assisted writing, digital storytelling, writing pedagogy and ChatGPT in creative writing.*

Introduction

Writing is generally argued to be one of the most difficult skills in EFL classrooms for various reasons. It is observed that students often attempt to translate into English from their mother tongue when they are asked to write ideas in English, especially if they are asked to write something creative. Since writing is a recursive process involving planning, translating, and reviewing as it is observed by Flower and Hayes, they struggle to demonstrate strong written communication skills in English as it is a foreign language [365-387]. Whereas lack of confidence is often quoted as another reason by EFL teachers while discussing the hurdles they faced when facilitating acquisition of four skills in general and writing proficiency in particular. EFL experts have been utilizing various methods to tackle this issue. When we consider the post covid digital boom among the general public and the widespread dependency of AI in the field of education, which is observed to be the defining future of the contemporary era that cannot be left unaddressed, it is widely acknowledged that traditional teaching methods are insufficient for modern EFL learners. Considering the acquisition of writing skill among the non-native English learners, teachers have to implement technology-enhanced writing pedagogy in their classrooms in order to attract the attention of digital natives and the generation shaped by artificial intelligence. Giving a traditional writing assignment to such learners would result in copying AI generated content. From this perspective, the practice and guidance for writing among these students should involve selective and controlled use of AI tools like ChatGPT instead of sticking to the traditional writing instruction, and thus to be a motivation for learners to be constructive users while being part of broader trend in Artificial Intelligence in the field of education. This scenario urges updated EFL teachers to implement the potential possibilities of

digital storytelling which combines narrative writing supported by AI, prompting individual creative imagination and multimedia thinking aiming to encourage creative engagement and meaningful writing. This idea is further strengthened by the argument that learning improves when verbal and visual elements are combined. The lack of structured pedagogical frameworks combining AI tools, storytelling and EFL writing can be the substantial problem faced by the language trainers while they explore the possibility of digital story telling. This paper is an attempt to propose a pedagogical framework integrating AI-assisted digital storytelling since technology can be used to reshape writing practices and promoted narrative skills. This kind of ethical use of artificial intelligence can be counted as “AI for Good” [Berendt 2019].

Review of literature

A number of studies have explored the challenges faced during the teaching and learning of English language and they have proposed solutions that are quite relevant for traditional learners of English. While some of them with the theoretical base of Process Writing Theory [Flower & Hayes, 1981] and Output Hypothesis have analysed EFL writing challenges including grammar errors, limited vocabulary of the learners, weak cohesion/coherence and problems faced by them in generating ideas. Whereas some studies have focussed on digital storytelling combining narrative style and multimedia thinking in order to improve creativity of learners, ensure their active engagement while emphasising the construction of narrative structure. Such studies mainly focus on how students can be story creators while considering the possibility of meaning-based writing in the wake of Piaget's constructivism and Vygotsky's notion of social interaction in learning. A few other contemporary studies that explored the role of AI in language learning have delved into how to use ChatGPT in language learning context for brainstorming ideas, grammar correction, vocabulary support, and scaffolding writing. Those studies considered AI as a cognitive scaffold often using the theoretical standpoint of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Zone of Proximal Development or theories associated with the concept of Intelligent Tutoring System. Most of such studies focus on AI and storytelling independently rather than exploring an integrated approach indicating the necessity of integrated pedagogical frameworks.

AI digital storytelling: Pedagogical framework

As part of using ChatGPT as a tool of AI digital storytelling in ESL classroom, the instructor may consider the following pedagogical framework to implement ChatGPT-assisted writing cycle among his/her learners. It is divided into 6 steps starting from idea generation and ending with final storytelling output. The instructor has to follow this step-by-step model to ensure the effective application of the framework.

Stage 1: Generation of Ideas

In stage 1, students are requested to brainstorm story themes. The teacher may give timely directions as per circumstances. For instance, the teacher may encourage them to use ChatGPT prompts for brainstorming the themes for the digital story that they want to create. Teachers can give them examples like “Give 5 story ideas about friendship/life/travel”. Here the teacher is a guide for topic selection. The teacher has to ensure that all students could successfully enter the prompts for their desired themes.

Stage 2: Planning of the story

Once the students choose an idea for their story, the teacher directs them to imagine and create the necessary elements for a story. Students are encouraged to create characters, decide the setting of the story and prepare the plot outline. Then let them

think of creating a story that has a structure with suitable opening, climax and ending. During this stage they can ask some guidance either from the teacher or they may seek the support of ChatGPT “Help me structure a story with beginning, conflict, resolution”.

Stage 3: Writing the Draft

The third step involves writing the first draft by students. The teacher has to clarify that they need not to worry about the accuracy while they are writing the draft, rather they have to focus on fluency. Let them freely write the draft with the ideas that they have collected and generated. At this stage the teacher can consider the theory associated with the Process Writing Approach in which writing is viewed as a recursive process where the students write their ideas step by step, gradually refining and developing it, instead of seeing it as a one-time product.

Stage 4: AI Scaffolding

After the completion of drafting, the students are requested to use ChatGPT for refining the draft through vocabulary enhancement, grammar suggestions, and coherence improvement. They can submit the draft to the prompt box of ChatGPT and get the refined version of the story. The student must understand that the most important aspect of this stage is to compare the AI output with his or her original draft. This comparison indeed will provide some significant insights to the learners, even though they may not be able to fully grasp the nuances of those changes. This stage is supported by the argument of “Learning occurs through social interaction and guided support” [Vygotsky 1978].

Stage 5: Revision/Reflection

In this stage the students rewrite the improved version. While they rewrite, they are requested to engage in reflective questions based on the revised content. Let them observe what has been changed due to the use of AI intervention. They can realize how ChatGPT helped them in creative writing by letting them decide which version is better and why. “By leveraging the capabilities of AI, learners can receive immediate and targeted feedback, enabling them to identify areas for improvement and enhance their writing performance accordingly. This integration of AI into their writing practice has the potential to yield more efficient and effective learning outcomes” [Song C and Song Y 2023]. If they are not satisfied, they can do further modifications with new prompts.

Stage 6: Final Output: Storytelling

In the sixth stage the students complete the process of final draft with the help of the teacher and they may present the story for the whole class individually. This presentation can be considered as optional in which either they are provided an opportunity for oral storytelling or digital presentation. The teacher may ensure that the necessary support and feedback to promote the creative writing skill of the students. At this stage the “Learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment” [Piaget 1952].

Implications of the study

Using AI like ChatGPT in story writing as we discussed earlier has several significant implications. For teachers the use of AI in the classroom could be a great help to an extent for reducing the correction burden. Otherwise, correcting the work of the entire class will be a time-consuming herculean task which may make the entire process impossible. By the help of AI integration, the teacher can focus more on creativity and guidance, without which it would be impractical in traditional classrooms to an extent.

Like teachers, students can make use of AI be it ChatGPT or Gemini AI or any other similar platform for improving their creative writing skill. The approach can be an effective motivation for them. Definitely the vocabulary range of each student will be positively impacted by the AI generated suggestions and revisions which will be more customised and personalised as the student gives enough details including the grade of students and his or her exposure to language. The personalized suggestion of the AI may precisely improve the writing confidence of the student.

Curriculum designers have to think of integration of AI literacy into writing in syllabus in order to make the syllabus up to date. The traditional syllabus should be changed to accept the digital natives and AI driven generation. Similarly, the writing process should be given importance by shifting the prominence from product to process. The teacher has to educate the students about the need of becoming responsible AI users instead of overly dependent on AI. The students should not fully depend on AI for writing or any other academic activities. Instead, they may incorporate their talent and effort with the AI. This approach can promote ethical use of ChatGPT among the students which may train them in using any AI ethically since it is related to “the fundamental questions of ethics and humanity” [Stahl, B.C. 2021].

Conclusion

The combination of AI-integrated digital storytelling improves EFL writing pedagogy by providing structured writing support for students of different age groups by increasing learner engagement. Whereas the teacher can reduce the correction burden dealing with a large number of students in a short span of time while making the learners practice creative writing. The proposed framework fills the gap in literature by promoting creative writing and AI integration in ESL classrooms especially for school going students. The study is purely a conceptual attempt without empirical validation which indicates its limitation. The study also indicates the possibility of future research on classroom implementation and further comparative experiments in the field.

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